RAISING & ADDRESSING PARENT CONCERNS & COMPLAINTS POLICY

Philosophical Basis

Huntly Primary School Primary School and the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) recognise that involving parents in their child’s education is critical to children’s development and learning and as such both encourage the development of strong family-school partnerships. They also recognise that in all partnerships there will be times when there are disagreements and issues of concern that will need to be resolved. This policy provides the Huntly Primary School community with a procedure for dealing with parent concerns and complaints. The policy is based on our values of building relationships between students, staff and parents and of creating a safe and supportive learning and working environment for all students and staff. It is expected that all parties involved in parent concerns/complaints will act respectfully and in good faith, in a calm and courteous manner, maintaining appropriate confidentiality of the matter and recognising the rights and responsibilities of all parties. The Huntly Primary School community values should be adhered to at all times. It is school policy that complaints made by parents will in no way adversely affect their children.

Guidelines

1. Concerns and complaints covered by this procedure

1.1 This policy applies to parent concerns and complaints regarding any aspect of the care and/or education of their children whilst at Huntly Primary School. In accordance with DEECD guidelines, this policy does not apply to:
- Matters about which there are existing legislated rights of review or appeal. These include:
  - Student expulsions
  - Complaints about staff conduct which, if upheld, would constitute misconduct
  - Matters involving allegations of sexual assault (student critical incident matters)
  - Other criminal matters, and
- Concerns or complaints where a parent has employed and paid another party to represent them, such as a solicitor. In these situations, the concern or complaint must be referred to the Department’s Legal Services Branch.
1.2 If the School receives a parent concern/complaint that relates to one of these matters, the School will advise the parent of the applicable review and appeal processes.

2. Ownership and scope

2.1 Huntly Primary School will develop its procedures to address concerns and complaints in collaboration with parents and the school community.
3. The parent concern/complaint procedure:

**Step 1:** If appropriate, raise the concern/complaint informally with the appropriate member of staff.

Is the matter resolved?

- **NO**
  - **Step 2:** Lodge a formal complaint by completing the Parent Concern/Complaint form with the school office.
    
    (forms available from the school office)
  
  - **Step 3:** Huntly Primary School will allocate the matter to a member of staff who will contact the parent within 3 days to commence enquiries.

  - **Step 4:** Huntly Primary School will investigate the concern/complaint

  Is the matter resolved?

- **YES**
  - End of matter
- **NO**

  - **Step 5:** If unsatisfied with the outcome, the parent may escalate the matter by completing the “Election to Escalate” section of the School Response Record and lodging this with the school office. The concern/complaint will be escalated and investigated as set out in Step 3 and 4.

  Internal escalation ends once the Principal or School Council have investigated.

  - **Step 6:** If the matter remains unresolved following Principal or School Council (policy only) investigations, the parent may choose to escalate the matter externally with the Department Regional Office.
3.1 Step 1 - informal resolution
Huntly Primary School Primary School is committed to open and frequent communication between staff and parents. Parents are therefore encouraged (but not required) to attempt to resolve issue/s informally where appropriate, by raising the matter with the relevant member of staff at an appropriate time and location. An appointment can be made through the school office. Phone 5448866. Confidential, detailed or complicated issues should not be raised with staff when they are responsible for the supervision of students. For such matters, a mutually convenient meeting time and location should be arranged from 8:45am – 3:30pm.

3.2 Step 2 – Lodge formal concern/complaint
If informal resolution is not successful or is not appropriate, a parent may lodge the issue as a formal concern/complaint under this policy by completing a Parent Concern/Complaint Form (see Attachment 1) and lodging it with the School Office or the Assistant Principal. Parent Concern/Complaint Forms are available from the School Office. For further information about the difference between a formal and informal concern/complaint and about what matters may not be appropriate for informal resolution see the Further Information section at the end of this policy.

3.3 Step 3 – School to address the concern/complaint
Upon receiving a formal concern/complaint Huntly Primary School will allocate the concern/complaint to a staff member for enquiry and response. Unless a parent has specifically requested otherwise, wherever appropriate, concerns/complaints will be allocated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IF THE ISSUE RELATES TO......</th>
<th>THEN IT WILL BE ALLOCATED TO THE FOLLOWING......</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student learning issues or incidents that occurred within the class</td>
<td>Student’s class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues or incidents that affect more than one class across the year level</td>
<td>Unit Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious, complex or cross school issues</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues concerning School Policy</td>
<td>School Council/ Principal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where a concern/complaint relates to more than one type of issue, the School will determine who the concern/complaint is best allocated to.
Within 3 school days of lodgement, the staff member allocated the concern/complaint will contact the parent to:
1) Acknowledge receipt of the concern/complaint,
2) Inform the parent that they will be enquiring into the concern/complaint,
3) Make a time to discuss the concern/complaint with the parent, and
4) Provide the parent with a timeframe for the enquiry and response.

All attempts will be made to enquire into and respond to concern/complaints as promptly as possible. Parents should be aware that complex matters and those that are allocated to School Council (who meet on average once a month) will require longer response periods. If there is a delay in responding to a concern/complaint beyond the timeframe communicated, the parent will be notified.

3.4 Step 4 – Huntly Primary School to communicate outcome to parent
Once the enquiries are completed, Huntly Primary School will:
1) Communicate the outcome to the parent with as much detail as is possible, taking into account any relevant privacy requirements; and
2) Provide the parent with a copy of the completed School Response Record (Attachment B) outlining the enquiries made and the outcome.

If a concern/complaint is substantiated in whole or part, as part of the outcome Huntly Primary School will offer an appropriate remedy. For example, depending on the circumstances, Huntly Primary School might offer:
a. An explanation or further information about the issue
b. Mediation, counselling or other support
c. An apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
d. To change its decision
e. To change its policies, procedures or practices
f. To cancel a debt or offer a refund.

Huntly Primary School will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

3.5 Step 5 – Internal escalation of unresolved matters
If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome they may escalate the matter by completing the “Election to Escalate” section of the School Response Record and lodging this with the school office.
Unless the parent has specifically requested otherwise, wherever appropriate, Huntly Primary School will escalate concerns/complaints as follows for further enquiry:

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<tr>
<th>IF THE EARLIER ENQUIRY WAS CONDUCTED BY ..........</th>
<th>THEN IT WILL BE ESCALATED TO ........</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student’s class</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit Leader</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Regional Office</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An internally escalated concern/complaint will be investigated in accordance with the steps set out in **Step 3- School to address the concern/complaint.**

A parent may continue to escalate an unresolved concern/complaint internally until it has been investigated by the Principal or School Council.

**3.6 Step 6– External Escalation of unresolved matters**

If the matter remains unresolved following Principal or School Council investigation, the parent may choose to escalate the matter externally with:

- **Department Regional Office**
  - Community Liaison Officer
  - 54403111

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<th>RESOLVED</th>
<th>UNRESOLVED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

- **Central Office (Deputy Secretary, Office for Government School Education)**
  - 9637 2000

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOLVED</th>
<th>UNRESOLVED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

  If the complaint remains unresolved after all DEECD’s processes have been implemented, the Deputy Secretary may refer the complainant to an external agency, such as Ombudsman Victoria, for investigation.

**4. Monitoring and reporting concerns and complaints**

4.1 Huntly Primary School will maintain a system to record and monitor concerns/complaints and their resolution.

4.2 At least annually, Huntly Primary School will:

  - monitor formal parent concerns/complaints lodged under this policy and data from the Parent Opinion Survey to identify common and recurring themes that may need addressing; and
  - Report the following data about formal concerns/complaints received to School Council:
    - a) The number of concerns/complaints received
    - b) The types of concerns/complaints received (as indicated on the complaint form)
    - c) The number of concerns/complaints that were escalated internally and externally;
    - d) The average length of time taken to respond to a concern/complaint; and
e) Any changes to school practices or procedures that arose as a result of the concerns/complaints received.

4.3 School Council will use this information to assess the effectiveness of Huntly Primary School’s policies and procedures and identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing via policy or procedure changes.

5. Review
School Council will review its policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints as part of its cyclic policy and procedure review.

6. Further information:
What is the difference between a formal and an informal complaint?
Once a concern/complaint is lodged as a formal complaint, it will be addressed using the steps set out in this policy. Amongst other things, that means:
1. A formal record will be made of the concern/complaint,
2. The parent lodging the complaint will receive a written copy of the School Response Record; and
3. The nature of the concern/complaint will be reported to School Council as part of Huntly Primary School’s annual reporting and therefore form part of the data upon which School Council assesses the effectiveness of Huntly Primary School’s policies and procedures.

What sort of matters may not be suitable for informal resolution?
The following are examples of matters which may not be suitable for informal resolution:
1. Serious matters,
2. Where a formal record should be kept of the issue and/or its resolution
3. Where a recurring issue or theme is involved (the nature of formal concerns/complaints are monitored by Huntly Primary School so that any required policy or practice changes can be implemented)
4. Where attempts to resolve the matter informally have been unsuccessful, or
5. If it would be more appropriate for an independent staff member to be involved in investigating the concern/complaint.

Can I make an anonymous formal complaint?
Anonymous concern/complaint forms will be accepted however it may not be possible to fully enquire into the matters raised without sufficient detail. The Principal will determine the extent to which an anonymous concern/complaint will be investigated. Where the concern/complaint is about the Principal, the decision to investigate the complaint shall be referred to and made by the Regional Director via the Regions Community Liaison.

What support is available?
Parents and staff members may bring an advocate/support person (other than a paid representative) to any meeting held to discuss the concern/complaint. If a support person is attending a meeting, the parent/School should communicate this information prior to the meeting.
In attempting to resolve concerns/complaints, the parties may make use of any of the services provided to it by the Department of Education, including assistance from the Regional Office and/or the mediation services provided by the Dispute Settlement Centre Victoria.

**Who will see my Parent Concern/Complaint Form?**
Parent Concern/Complaint forms will be treated confidentially and will only be provided to people who are:
1. Involved in enquiring into the issues raised; or
2. Required to respond to/provide information relating to the issues raised.

If you have concerns about this issue, please contact the Principal.

**Will all formal complaints be actioned?**
Whilst Huntly Primary School is committed to treating all concerns and complaints seriously, the Principal may decide to take no action on a concern/complaint if in their opinion, the concern/complaint:
1. Would require an unjustifiable use of resources to investigate having regard to the nature of the issues raised;
2. Is not made in good faith,
3. Is an attempt to re-open an issue that has already been fully investigated, or
4. Is the result of unreasonable complainant behaviour (that is, behaviour that is significantly outside the expectations of co-operation, courtesy and respect or is orientated towards conflict. For example, complaints including personal abuse or material clearly intended to intimidate). In circumstances involving unreasonable complainant behaviour, the Principal will develop a plan to address the complainant and their interaction with the school in accordance with DEECD policy.

**Where can I get further information regarding parent concern/complaints?**
Further information regarding the issues covered in this policy is available from the Principal or from the DEECD parent complaints website at: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/complainschool.aspx
Advice about raising a concern of making a complaint is also available from Parents Victoria – 9380 2158.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Implemented</th>
<th>15/6/15</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approved By</td>
<td>Huntly PS School Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approved Authority (Signature &amp; Date)</td>
<td>Huntly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible for Review</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review date</td>
<td>15/6/18</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
PARENT/CONCERN/COMPLAINT FORM

This form should be used by parents/guardians to lodge a formal concern/complaint under Huntly Primary School’s Raising & Addressing Parent/Guardian Concerns and Complaints Policy. Copies of the Policy are available from the school office. You may request assistance from any member of staff to complete this form.

PERSONAL DETAILS

Parent/Guardian Name: _____________________________________________

Best Contact Number: _____________________________________________

Student/s Name & Grade: ___________________________________________

Please note that whilst anonymous concerns/complaints will be accepted, they may not be able to be fully investigated without sufficient detail.

CONCER / COMPLAINT DETAILS

TYPE: (Please tick one or more)

☐ Friendship ☐ Playground Incident ☐ Homework

☐ Curriculum ☐ Classroom Incident ☐ Staff Conduct

☐ Sports ☐ Camps/Excursions ☐ OTHER

Name of Policy ___________________________________________________

Please provide a description of the issue including all relevant information (add extra sheets if required):

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Please turn over.

9
Have you attempted to raise/resolve the matter informally? If so, please provide details:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Outcome Sought – In your opinion how do you think this issue could be resolved?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Date: ....................  Signature: ..............................

Thank you. Huntly Primary School treats all concerns and complaints seriously. This matter will be allocated to a staff member who will contact you within three school days of lodgement of this form. Please see the Policy for further information. If you have any concerns about any aspect of the Policy or procedure, please contact the Principal.
SCHOOL RESPONSE RECORD

This form is to be used by Huntly Primary School to respond to formal concerns/complaints lodged under Huntly Primary School's Raising & Addressing Parent Concerns & Complaints Policy.

COMPLAINT DETAILS:

Complaint Lodged By: 

Complaint Lodgement Date: 

Allocated to (staff member): 

Brief Summary of Concern/Complaint: 

ENQUIRIES MADE:

Discussion/s with Complainant on: 

Other Enquires: 

OUTCOME:

School Response to concern/complaint: 

Any action to be taken as result of outcome: 

Office Use Only

Date Form Lodged

/ / 20

Matter Number
Action to be taken by (insert date & responsible person)

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

Outcome communicated to parent/s on: ________________________________

**Parent Section:**

I have received a copy of this School Response Record.

☐

My concern/complaint has been resolved to my satisfaction.

☐

OR

My concern/complaint has NOT been resolved and I elect to escalate this Matter for further review (see Policy information about escalation).

☐

Date: .................................. Parent Signature: ............................................

Allocated Staff Member Signature: .............................................................